

ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
COMMISSION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

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July 11, 2008

Board of County Commissioners for St. Mary's County  
P.O Box 653, Governmental Center  
Leonardtown, MD 20650

Dear Commissioners:

At the last meeting of the Commission of the Environment (COE), a concern about the Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) was brought to our attention. A citizen in attendance informed us that the SWAC has not held a meeting for several months. The SWAC meetings for March, April, May, June and July were cancelled because a quorum could not be established. As we understand it, the quorum issue arises from the fact that the SWAC's bylaws, adopted in 1996, state that the SWAC is composed of seven members and that four members constitute a quorum. The actual membership of the SWAC has been only four or five members for many years, however. Thus, if one or two members cannot attend a meeting, the SWAC will not have a quorum.

Solid waste is directly tied to health of our environment. Because the SWAC is unable to conduct business, we are concerned that critical issues in solid waste management – such as recycling incentives, curbside recycling, public education about single stream recycling and solid waste services in general, small business use of solid waste facilities, competition among solid waste management services, use of biodiesel in Department of Public Works and Transportation vehicles, and issues surrounding the St. Mary's County Transfer Station and imposition of the new \$60 annual fee - are not being addressed. Unfortunately, the COE does not have the time, resources, or in-depth knowledge of solid waste necessary to tackle these issues. Rather, we support a change to the SWAC's bylaws that would allow that group to meet. In the short term, we respectfully suggest changing the bylaws to require a three-member quorum. Ultimately, we believe more citizens should to be appointed to the SWAC. We do not feel that reducing the frequency of SWAC meetings from 12 meetings a year to anything less frequent will solve this problem; it would only exacerbate the backlog of work the SWAC currently faces.

We appreciate your consideration of this very important matter and hope that it can be resolved soon. We are happy to help in any way we can, such as by advertising SWAC vacancies on our COE web page. Please let us know how we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,



John B. Wheeler

Chairman, Commission on the Environment

Cc:

Director, Dept. of Public Works & Transportation

Mr. Richard Tarr, Manager, Solid Waste

Mr. Keenon James, Chairman, Solid Waste Advisory Committee